

June 23, 2008

**AG APPROPRIATIONS BILL RESTORES
POSITIVE VISION FOR RURAL AMERICA, OBEY SAYS**

Measure Invests in Rural Infrastructure, Child Nutrition, Food Safety, Conservation & Research

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) today called the FY2009 funding bill for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, which the House Appropriation Committee is set to consider this week, a "positive vision for rural America."

"This is the first big step in what will be a long process to secure vitally important investments in rural infrastructure, child nutrition, food safety, conservation, research and regulation of commodity markets," Obey said. "While we have a long way to go in the legislative process, this bill is a bold statement of congressional priorities and the needs of rural America and it represents a clear rejection of the Bush Administration's proposals to disinvest in America's rural communities."

"We have a \$400 billion backlog in sewer and water needs and many small rural communities simply lack the tax base to upgrade their wastewater and drinking water systems, yet the Bush budget slashed water grants for small communities. Access to high speed communications is vital to rural communities, yet the Bush budget proposed to eliminate the only program at USDA that helps bring high speed internet service to rural areas. Food costs are up sharply, yet the Bush budget eliminated important nutrition programs and pushes costs onto states who are already suffering a budget crunch due to the economic slowdown," Obey added. "This bill rejects those damaging proposals and charts a progressive way forward for rural communities."

Among its many provisions, Obey noted that the bill:

- implements country of origin labeling so Americans know where their food is coming from and maintains a prohibition on the importation of chicken from China, where birds have

been found to be so loaded with steroids that if Olympic athletes ate them they would be disqualified from competition;

- strengthens animal identification, where Wisconsin leads the nation, and toughens requirements for school nutrition programs to ensure that suppliers are complying with animal ID;
- restores more than \$600 million to rural development programs, including rural business loans and grants, public safety facilities, and rural electrification and telecommunication programs;
- provides additional resources for research, surveillance and management to combat growing threats to food and fiber production including Mad Cow Disease, Chronic Wasting Disease, Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia, Emerald Ash Borer, avian flu, and Johnes' Disease;
- provides important investments in organic agriculture, fruit and vegetable crops, sustainable agriculture and conservation;
- toughens oversight of energy and commodity futures trading.

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